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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE

Conducted by
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Introduction

The church like other human groups is part of the social order. Its life consists in the give and take of an ever active reciprocity. Its ideal aim is to Christianize every phase of community life so that whether at worship or at work, in home or school, shop or factory, court or legislature, the individual may enjoy equally that perfect social order which we describe in ideal phrase as the Kingdom of God.

The transition from the forlorn ambition of saving a few select souls out of a perishing world for heavenly bliss to the bold world-saving mission of the Christ is now well under way and a great body of literature has sprung up voicing this stalwart hope. The fear that the assumption of our Lord's mission might menace some of the finer fruits of individual piety is disappearing, while at the same time the rather hackneyed demand for all sorts of social service necessitates the most enlightened leadership on the part of ministers and church officials. It is for the purpose of aiding in the preparation of such leaders that this reading course is offered.

In order to center attention on the most recent literature of the movement and to canvass the methodology of social action by the church, it becomes necessary to pass over many significant volumes that have helped to pioneer this cause by linking it with the teachings of Jesus and by marking out a field that bore the name "Christian sociology." The books of Shailer Mathews on *The Social Teachings of Jesus* and *The Church and the Changing Order*, as well as that of Francis Greenwood Peabody on *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* helped greatly in accomplishing the former part of this task, while John R. Commons in *Social Reform and the Church*, Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, and Charles R. Henderson in practically all of their writings defined in compelling terms what was known as Christian sociology. The monumental work of Charles Booth in his *Life and Labor of the People in London*, together with the work, writings, and biography of the Seventh Earl of Shaftsbury, forced the church in Great Britain to give heed to community conditions; while in this country Jacob Riis performed a similar task in *How the Other Half Lives* and *The Battle with the Slums*.

The urgency of the cause and a divine discontent with perfunctory church work were brought out in telling fashion by Walter Rauschenbusch in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, *Christianizing the Social Order*, and *The Social Principles of*

Jesus. However, these writers, with the exception of Henderson in his *Social Duties from the Christian Point of View* and Strong in his studies entitled *The Gospel of the Kingdom,* left very much to be done in the actual problems of method. The tense and prophetic utterances of Rauschenbusch still left us with the question of "How?" upon our lips.

To be sure, in the field of pastoral theology there were many books touching here and there upon community problems, but in the main the point of view was rather "How can the church use the community for her own good and upbuilding?" than "How can the church best serve community life in its entirety?"

For the purpose of this reading course we shall consider the church as co-operating with the community in its six elementary pursuits which constitute the aims of society. These are health, wealth, sociability, knowledge, beauty, and righteousness. It will be noted that these are not primary quests in a biological sense, the biological bases of human action being: securing food, reproducing, and, possibly, gregariousness; but the sublimates and complexes of these produce social organisms seeking these six forms of satisfaction. In arranging the studies by books it will hardly be practicable, however, to give exclusive consideration to each of these interests under a separate head. Such a topical arrangement would involve references to many books in each study and it will probably be more satisfactory to the reader to keep these categories in mind and to consider the church's co-operation with the community in securing these ends while studying each of the assigned volumes consecutively rather than piecemeal. The arrangement of books will proceed from the theoretical to the practical with major emphasis on the latter.

Required Books for this Course

I. Sociological Introduction and Apologetic:
Ellwood, *Sociology and Modern Social Problems.*
Ward, *Social Evangelism.*

II. Health and Wealth Interests:
Allen, *Civics and Health.*
Penman, *Poverty, the Challenge of the Church.*

III. Sociability and Survey:
Gates, *Recreation and the Church.*
Aronovici, *The Social Survey.*

IV. The Rural Field:
Vogt, *Rural Sociology.*
Farwell, *Village Improvement.*
Wilson, *The Church at the Center.*

V. The City Parish:
Hodges and Richert, *The Institutional Church.*

VI. Reconstruction:
Cutting, *The Church and Society.*
Strayer, *The Reconstruction of the Church.*

STUDY I

Required Books

Ellwood, *Sociology and Modern Social Problems.*
Ward, *Social Evangelism.*

Professor Ellwood's book is in many ways elementary, but its study should serve to define the nature of sociology and to emphasize its importance for the modern minister. In addition to this service it has the great merit of presenting

comprehensively some of the larger problems with which society has to deal. The first section, chapters i to viii, should be read critically and for the purpose of ascertaining whether there is any place among the sciences for sociology and, if so, just what that place is. It will be noted that the author's description of the related sciences and particularly his discount of economic determinism as a philosophy of history leave the way open for a high valuation of the work which the church may perform for society.

If one is unfriendly toward the Darwinian theory of evolution or hazy as to its meaning, the treatment accorded it in terms of the kinship of all animal species and the reasons adduced in its support should be of decided benefit. So also the consideration of Spencer's theory of universal evolution helps us to grasp the fact of social evolution, and to regard ourselves and our institutions as parts of a society which is always in the making. The place of war in social evolution will, by force of present events, command attention, and revisions of its place in social evolution may occur to the reader.

Possibly from the point of view of the standard work of the church the section on *the family* is the most important part of the book. Note the strength of the case for monogamy, the significant place of religion as a form of social control in this field, the effect of the Reformation, the struggle between family life and industrial evolution, the bearing of children on the stability of marital bonds, the dimensions of divorce, the causes and remedies.

In considering the problem of immigration, attempt to formulate plans whereby the church might more efficiently serve the foreign-born and decide the main features of a democratic approach as contrasted with hierarchical methods. In connection with the negro problem what could religious bodies do to mitigate the difficulties attendant upon the present migration to the north? The author's treatment of crime should stir up a whole series of questions on the work of the church in prevention, ministry to the criminal, reclamation, and religious education for all members of the community.

Professor Ward's book should be read in one, or, at most, two sittings. It calls for less study than that of Ellwood and its truth will tend to deepen our sense of social obligation, if not of sin, rather than to quicken debate. If the reader becomes satisfied with the complementary nature of the individual and social gospel, so called, and takes his place as a sincere convert to community service and leadership through the church, the aim of this assignment will have been accomplished. As related to this first study, if the reader can secure copies of the *American Journal of Sociology* for January, 1916 and 1917, and read the articles on "American Democracy and the Modern Church," he may find further stimulation for his thought.

Questions for Discussion

1. Does population conform to the theory of Malthus?
2. What religious concepts are based on family life?
3. What correspondences and what differences become evident in a comparison of Christianity and Socialism?
4. Compare the theological and scientific explanations of crime.
5. What are the forms of social maladjustment in this community?
6. What topics for preaching and what organization plans, if any, have come to you from the reading assignment?